

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. / Lynchburg Community Council**  
**October 2004**

**GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER AT PUBLIC EVENTS**

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is honored universally for his leadership in human rights and world peace. He was a Christian minister and his beliefs and actions stemmed from his deep faith. The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr./ Lynchburg Community Council was created by the Lynchburg City Council to sponsor activities in keeping with his ideals.

Because the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Human Rights, Inc. is open to the entire community and the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr./ Lynchburg Community Council represents all the people of our city, public meetings sponsored by the Council are interfaith in nature. This means they include Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Unitarians, and persons of other religious persuasions or no religious persuasion. With this in mind we offer the following guidelines to persons who may be invited to speak or perform at these events.

1. Prayers offered should be inclusive. Ending a prayer "in Jesus name," while perfectly appropriate in ecumenical settings, excludes Jews, Muslims, and others in interfaith settings. We suggest "for Thy name's sake" or simply "Amen" as an appropriate ending to a prayer.
2. While religious music associated with the various faith traditions is not excluded from interfaith public events sponsored by the Council, these selections should be offered as personal faith statements and not as something to be endorsed by everyone present. Soloists and musical groups should respect the diversity of the audience.
3. When everyone present is called upon to sing in unison, the musical selections should be inclusive. This means, for example, that the group is not asked to sing a song that contains an implicit or explicit Christian affirmation about Jesus' divinity to which some present could not subscribe. It is natural for the Christian community to base its unity in Jesus Christ at ecumenical events. In interfaith settings, however, it is necessary to base our unity in God.
4. Persons invited to speak at these public events need to remain sensitive to audience diversity. Affirmations and challenges need to be inclusive. Evangelistic type appeals, for example, would not be appropriate.
5. Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and Unitarians are united in their appreciation of Jesus as a moral teacher whose ethic has broad application. The Jewish community, for example, has no problem with a person sharing his or her own faith journey and personal testimony about

how God has worked in his/her life or how important Jesus has been in that process. A boundary is crossed, however, if a speaker expects and calls upon the whole audience to embrace, affirm, agree with or share in his/her particular point of view about Jesus' divinity.

The purpose of these guidelines is not intended to diminish or restrain the public witness or spiritual enthusiasm of any participant. Rather they are intended to sensitize participants to the diversity present in interfaith gatherings so that our "selections" can be appropriate to the occasion. The Lynchburg Community Council is committed to "keeping the dream alive" and challenging each new generation to embrace Dr. King's vision of a "beloved community."

These guidelines were developed for the  
Martin Luther King, Jr. / Lynchburg Community Council  
by Nathan C. Brooks, III and approved by the MLK/LCC